

Beowulf

VII

HROTHGAR spake, the Scyldings'-helmet:--
"For fight defensive, Friend my Beowulf,
to succor and save, thou hast sought us here.
Thy father's combat [footnote 1] a feud enkindled
when Heatholaf with hand he slew
among the Wylfings; his Weder kin
for horror of fighting feared to hold him.
Fleeing, he sought our South-Dane folk,
over surge of ocean the Honor-Scyldings,
when first I was ruling the folk of Danes,
wielded, youthful, this widespread realm,
this hoard-hold of heroes. Heorogar was dead,
my elder brother, had breathed his last,
Healfdene's bairn: he was better than I!
Straightway the feud with fee [footnote 2] I settled,
to the Wylfings sent, o'er watery ridges,
treasures olden: oaths he [footnote 3] swore me.

Sore is my soul to say to any
of the race of man what ruth for me
in Heorot Grendel with hate hath wrought,
what sudden harrings. Hall-folk fail me,
my warriors wane; for Wyrð hath swept them
into Grendel's grasp. But God is able
this deadly foe from his deeds to turn!
Boasted full oft, as my beer they drank,
earls o'er the ale-cup, armed men,
that they would bide in the beer-hall here,
Grendel's attack with terror of blades.
Then was this mead-house at morning tide
dyed with gore, when the daylight broke,
all the boards of the benches blood-besprinkled,
gory the hall: I had heroes the less,
doughty dear-ones that death had reft.
-- But sit to the banquet, unbind thy words,
hardy hero, as heart shall prompt thee."

Gathered together, the Geatish men
in the banquet-hall on bench assigned,
sturdy-spirited, sat them down,
hardy-hearted. A henchman attended,
carried the carven cup in hand,
served the clear mead. Oft minstrels sang

blithe in Heorot. Heroes revelled,
no dearth of warriors, Weder and Dane.

Footnotes.

1.

There is no irrelevance here. Hrothgar sees in Beowulf's mission a heritage of duty, a return of the good offices which the Danish king rendered to Beowulf's father in time of dire need.

2.

Money, for wergild, or man-price.

3.

Ecgtheow, Beowulf's sire.